

# MEDIA RELEASE

**McAlester Army Ammunition Plant**

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## Olympic-style archery course helps schools establish state-wide program

MCALESTER, Okla.— McAlester Army Ammunition Plant was the site of a state training program to help schools establish Olympic-style target archery training for Oklahoma's youth. The course was taught by Steve Burge, information and education specialist and Shane Fields, both from Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Fields is the game warden for Pittsburg and Latimer Counties.

About 23 people attended the Sept. 4 event and among those were Roger Hemphill, Haileyville high school principal and Michael Martin, Haileyville schools athletic director.

Hemphill said that as soon as he gets his certificate he'd like to order the equipment but will probably have to write a grant or hold a fundraiser to pay for the \$2,600 equipment package. The archery industry lowered the price of the equipment from \$4,800. The kit includes 11 bows, 60 arrows, five targets, a bow rack, a backstop and a repair kit.

Haileyville has about 480 students from grade school through high school and Hemphill said he would like to see the archery program established as early as next spring. "We'll take any an all kids who want to learn to shoot," he said.

The archery program is designed for students in fourth through twelfth grades. The curriculum covers archery history, safety, techniques, equipment, mental concentration and self-improvement. About 75 Oklahoma schools have the archery program.

<http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/archerycart.htm>

One of the other trainees was Spencer Grace, 24, a wildlife technician at Ouachita National Forest. When he obtains his certificate Grace said he will be going to local schools in rural areas like Hodgen, Heavner and Wister to train students and then train school officials on how to give these archery classes. Grace has been a bow and arrow hunter for 12 years.

"It's really vital to get young kids involved in shooting sports because it gets young people interested in the outdoors, teaches them respect for wildlife and helps control over population if they decide to hunt with their new skills," Grace said.

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As they taught under the overcast sky, any casual observer could immediately see the enthusiasm Burge and Fields had for this program even at one time saying, "I'd like to see a Southeastern Oklahoma kid compete in the Olympics."

Burge emphasized that most of the youth who participate in this sport are not active in one of the other major sports like football, basketball or baseball. And Hemphill agreed. "This program will be a great thing for these kids. It will put them on the same level as our current athletes," he said.

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